8.6.2. Old Swedish geometrical maps

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Sweden has a unique collection of large scale maps from the 1630s on. These maps show in detail the agrarian landscape at the time including the building tofts, the land use distribution in arable land, hay meadows, paddocks and so on. Even line elements like fences, roads and boundaries are registered. Together with the maps there is a text description (Nationsmuseums kartverk) covering cadastral and economic data. There are for instance figures over the size of arable land and harvest of hay for each farm. Besides these notations of the quality of the soil, type of grassland, hop gardens, water mills, fishing sites and other items. No other country in the world has a nearly as comprehensive, coherent and systematic large scale mapping from 1600’s first half. In total there are maps from more than 12,000 hamlets, villages and single farms in Sweden, before the Treaty of Brömsebro 1645. Since 2010 all maps and transcribed texts are available as open access on the Web. There is also a connected data base called GEOHOG with statistics, quantitative and qualitative data also available as open access: www.riksarkivet.se.geog

8.6.3. Danish land registers

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After yet another lost war (1657-1660) against the contemporary superpower, Sweden, the need for a new danish taxation system of the agrarian population arose. In the 1660s information of each farms land rent, e.g. type and amount of natural goods paid by the tenants to their landlords, was collected and from this the taxes were then subsequently fixed. Twenty years later in the 1680s a new taxation was carried out; every strip of cultivated land was measured and valued, and furthermore a rougher estimation of the non-cultivated areas such as grasslands, forests, heaths and moors were carried out. Finally, all values and estimates were calculated, converted and summarized for each farm, resulting in the total valuation in one uniform unit. These two land registers are huge, even for a European standards, and furthermore they were carried out systematic for each farm in the kingdom. They can provide us with a unique and detailed picture of the physical landscape, of the land ownership and of the settlement structure before the agrarian reforms dramatically changed it all. Both registers have been subject to digitization and mapping in GIS the last decade.

8.6.4. Finding agrarian capitalism in Norway c. 1500–1800

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The point of departure of this article is the research on agrarian capitalism in Norway in c. 1500–1800 based on cadastres and deeds. It has been a widespread opinion that the Norwegian farming prior to 1800 had no commercial potential. A common suggestion is that the climate conditions, the scattered population and the scarcity of arable land constituted major obstacles to any development of livestock and cereal production for sale, markets and consumers. There were no or at least extremely weak foundations for any capitalistic element in the peasants’ farming, neither in the landed estates owned by burghers and state officials nor in the demesne land held by the nobility. The nobility had reached the edge of extinction, while the burghers and the state officials only succeeded to a minor extent in acquiring large and coherent landed estates and even less geographically concentrated estates. Their landed estates were scattered around over a wide area, and the higher estates were seldom invested in commercial use of their landed properties. Furthermore, the social distribution of land properties also left little room for large-scale production. In the 17th century the numerous peasants owned 40 per cent of the landed estates, and their share increased to two-thirds around 1820. This paper seeks to examine to which degree the mentioned description fits into the historical reality of Norway c. 1500-1800.